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The Map is Not the Territory

by MaverickZ3r0

Summary

In which the Shepherds are lost, Robin relies too much on maps, Chrom feels they bicker like an old married couple, Morgan knows things she shouldn't, and Lucina is very confused.

Notes

Fits into a larger AU. Will be added to that collection if and when said series ever gains a name. No knowledge of said AU is necessary to read this piece, though.

They were two days into their trip to the Dragon's Table when Chrom noticed a group of cacti he was sure they'd passed before. He remembered, because it was near where they'd set up camp for lunch the previous day and Sumia had nearly tripped into one.

"Robin," he said after a second, turning his head to look at the tactician, who was holding the map with an air of confidence, "are we doubling back on our route?"

"Hm?" Robin looked up, peering into the endless desert as if he could tell one way from the other there. "Of course not."

"It's just that I'm sure we've been this way before," he said, indicating the cacti--which, surely Robin would remember that too?

"Impossible," was the firm declaration. "It's just a similar plant, that's all."

"Because I could swear that's the piece that broke off when Cynthia hit it to keep her mother from falling into it--"

"It's just your imagination," Robin said, waving a hand carelessly. "Probably knocked off by some desert animal."

What animal? Do you see any animals?

He refrained from saying that part, though, since it seemed unnecessarily rude. What he did say wasn't much better. "...Are you sure you know where we're going?"

Robin halted, and so did he, everyone else stumbling to a stop behind them. When he spoke, his voice was low and dangerous. "What did you just say?"

Chrom felt as though he'd said something gravely wrong and accidentally stumbled into range of a dozen mages. "Uh. Uh. I don't mean--that is to say, of course I think you know what you're doing! It's just...I think we...might be...lost?"

He hadn't actually seen Robin ever give someone a look like that, with the exception of someone he was about to draw a Thoron tome on. "We are not lost. We have a map."

He peered over at the map, and suddenly noticed something their mapping sessions at night times hadn't quite conveyed to him. "...Do you know where we *are* on the map?"

Silence. The temperature seemed to drop about fifteen degrees around them, which was actually rather refreshing.

"Of course I do," Robin said finally, the same frost in his tone.

Feeling as though he was pointlessly jumping in front of a blow, Chrom plowed on recklessly. "Do you know where the Dragon's Table is on the map?"

More silence. There was a very slight tinge of pink to Robin's cheeks now. "Well..."

"All right. Find the nearest village then." Chrom sighed. "I had hoped to do this without alerting the Plegians in any way, but it looks like we'll need to ask directions."

"We don't need directions," was the immediate objection. "We have a map."

"Is the Dragon's Table on the map?" he asked warily.

"Of course it..." Robin trailed off. "That's not the point! We'll find it. Look, we don't need directions."

"How are we going to find it if we have no idea where it is?" Chrom demanded. "It's not even on the map, so we need directions."

"Do you trust the map, Chrom?"

"What?" At some point, he had become as lost as he knew they were.

"Do you trust the map?" Robin waved the parchment in his face. "Trust the map, Chrom! You know the map! You love the map!"

He was very, very confused. "I...you aren't talking about the map, are you? Because if you are, that doesn't make any sense."

"He means trust the person reading the map," Morgan piped up from several paces behind them, apparently abandoning all pretense that the entire army wasn't listening to them argue.

"Yes, thank you." Robin waved the map in front of Chrom's face again, and he resisted the urge to swat at it. "Trust the map, Chrom! We don't need directions. Let's keep going."

"Keep going *where*?" he asked, exasperated. "If you can tell me where we're going--point to a place *on the map*--then I won't lead us all to the nearest village."

"Going...this way!" Robin said, pointing to a clearly random place on the map which was approximately half an inch off where he seemed to think they were standing. "See? Not far."

"Then where are the Plegians?" It didn't make sense that they wouldn't be marked. "If we're nearing the Table, shouldn't they be around to try and stop us?"

"Obviously Validar is already using them all as sacrifices."

He felt the urge to throttle Robin, although he was certain he could claim later it was out of love. "Then where are these sacrifices?"

"At the Dragon's Table."

"Where we are not," he felt moved to point out.

"Not far now!" Robin proclaimed.

"Now dad's going to tell him we're going to go ask for directions again," Morgan stage whispered.

He ignored her through a supreme act of will. "We need to find out where we're going. Where's the nearest village?"

"We don't need to go to the nearest village," Robin insisted. "We have a map. We're fine."

"I am asking you," Chrom said, patience wearing thin, "to look at the *map* and find us somewhere to go where people can tell you where on the *map* we have to go. Then you can use the *map* and tell us how to get there so we aren't stuck wandering through the desert until the end of the world! All right?"

"What on earth are they doing?" Lucina asked, probably not half as quietly as she thought she was due to the absolute silence aside from people talking. "Shouldn't we just keep moving regardless?"

"I love it," Morgan gushed. "They are such a married couple! This is a classic argument."

"It is?" Lucina wondered aloud. "There are classic arguments?"

"Pulling over and asking directions is one of the greats," Morgan said seriously. "There's always someone who wants to and someone with the map who doesn't want to. And we're witnessing it

with our own fathers! Isn't it fantastic?"

"Um," was Lucina's only response.

"You're just saying all of that to hide the fact you think we're lost," Robin declared, evidently pretending the last minute hadn't happened.

"I'm not hiding it!" Chrom exclaimed. "We're lost. I said it earlier! We are definitely completely lost!"

"I'm sure you think we wouldn't be lost if you had the map," Robin muttered bitterly, but still loudly enough for most of the company to hear.

"I don't care who has the damn map!" He felt like tearing his hair out. "I just want us to get where we're going sometime this year, and I doubt anyone feels like combing every inch of the desert for the next hundred!"

"Then let me navigate! It's worked for years." The tactician huffed, and Chrom was seized by the urge to reach over and shake him.

"It works when *you know where we're going*." It was a good thing there wasn't a convenient post to slam his head into, as he felt sure he'd brain damage himself before getting through. "You don't, I don't, none of us do, so let's ask someone who does!"

Robin glared at him and waved the piece of parchment in his face again. "Let me navigate."

He grabbed the map, yanking it out of Robin's hands. It tore slightly, but the piece didn't come off.

"Chrom!"

"Now you don't have the map," he said through clenched teeth. "Now *I* have the map, so if the person who has the map is navigating, then I'm saying we're going to the nearest town. All right?"

"Give me that," Robin insisted, reaching for the map as Chrom held it away from him. "You don't know how to read it."

"Then *you* guide us to the nearest town!" He held it away still, despite Robin's efforts to reach across his arms and bat the parchment out of his hands. "I'll only give it back to you if you promise to take us somewhere we can ask directions!"

Robin's eyes narrowed, and Chrom really didn't like that calculating look. He liked it even less five seconds later when an elbow impacted his stomach, knocking the breath out of him. He clung to the paper, hurriedly trying to stuff it down the front of his suit.

With a cry, Robin tackled him to the ground, and they both hit it hard, throwing sand up everywhere. Chrom would normally be able to end such an action relatively easily, but not only had he been caught off-guard and winded, he was still trying not to let go of the map for reasons which had escaped him. Not to mention it occurred to him halfway through trying to stuff the parchment down the front of his chest that Robin of all people had no reservations about putting his hands there.

While all this was going on, the Shepherds were watching them with varying degrees of horror, amusement, and plain confusion. The chief thought among them was 'why are our commanders

acting like four year olds?'

"This is even better an ending than I could have hoped," Morgan declared as they wrestled on the ground. "Isn't this funny, Lucina?"

"*Why* are they acting like this?" Lucina despaired, ignoring her sister. "We don't have any time to waste! Surely getting there is more important than a petty squabble?"

"Five gold on the captain," Sully said, drawing a few looks. "He's got this in the bag."

"I don't know," Stahl mused. "Robin looks pretty determined, and he's kind of scrappy."

"The sex must be fantastic," Cordelia murmured, loudly enough for everyone to hear.

Lucina rested her face in her hands. "Why me?" she asked no one in particular. "Why *my* parents? Why don't these things happen to other people, who *don't* have a world to save?"

"Come on, Lucina. Five easy gold!" Morgan waved her hand in the air. "I'll take that bet!"

"You are a *princess*, you shouldn't be gambling--"

Before long, the entire area had devolved into a series of inter-Shepherd squabbles and arguments, by which point Chrom and Robin had stopped fighting and were sitting on the sand at the front, nursing their wounds. Chrom poked at his cheek lightly and winced, and Robin was gingerly holding a split lip where Chrom's elbow had accidentally connected in the melee.

"I guess we're making camp here," Chrom said, frowning at their infighting troops. "I would have hoped to cover more ground today."

"They're acting like children," Robin agreed with a sigh, picking up the map from where it was half-buried under the sand and rolling it up. He tucked it into an inner coat pocket. "I don't know what we're going to do with them."

"I'm half-tempted to turn them around and send most of them back to Ylisse, but we need them." He shook his head. "Are you all right? Sorry about that, I didn't mean to hit you, especially not that hard."

"It's fine." Robin waved it off. "I probably shouldn't have bitten you under these circumstances. So we'll head to the nearest village as soon as they all calm down?"

"Sounds good to me," Chrom agreed, relieved they had stopped bickering like an old married couple--they weren't old, after all. "I suppose in the meantime we should set up for dinner, since no one else is likely to..."

"Such children," was the agreement. "Really, they should learn from our example."

Chrom opted not to say anything to that, and felt that was probably the smartest thing he'd done all day.

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